

Hurricane Harvey EPA Response

Daily News Clips

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1 – "Pops" at flooded Arkema plant in Crosby

<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/article/Second-of-chemicals-erupt-at-flooded-Arkema-plant-12166702.php>

Pressure valves on one or more containers of volatile organic peroxides "popped" late Thursday at the flooded Arkema plant in Crosby, according to the company. Leaders are on high alert for explosions like the ones that shot plumes of smoke into the air and caused an hours-long fire at the chemical plant early Thursday.

2 – Harvey recovery: Can Louisiana contractors work in Texas?

http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2017/09/harvey_recovery_will_texas_hon.html#incart_m-rpt-2

It took years for the New Orleans region to rebound from Hurricane Katrina, even with a surge of contractors to assist with demolition and rebuilding. Now as the damage toll continues to mount in Texas from Tropical Storm Harvey, the need is expected to be just as acute once homeowners are able to return to their flooded properties. The scale of damage in Texas could well exceed the capacity of local professionals, meaning there will be ample need and opportunity for out-of-state contractors to work in the recovery. But to protect property owners, there are state licensing requirements and regulations in place for visiting workers. Will Louisiana contractors be able to cross the border and work right away? That depends on their specialty.

3 – Houston is on the long road to recovery. Here's what you should know today.

<https://www.texastribune.org/2017/09/01/houston-now-its-path-recovery-heres-what-you-need-know/>

The floodwaters are beginning to recede, and Houstonians are preparing for a long road to recovery. The Hurricane Harvey death toll was 39 as of Thursday evening, after Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences spokeswoman Tricia Bentley told ABC News her office had confirmed seven more storm-related deaths. Gov. Greg Abbott will be briefed this afternoon on the latest Harvey news at the Texas Department of Public Safety's Operations Center and will hold a press conference shortly afterward.

4 – Harvey's Cleanup List: Toxic Plumes, Dead Animals, Moldy Debris

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-09-01/harvey-s-cleanup-list-toxic-plumes-dead-animals-moldly-debris>

Harvey has moved on from the U.S. Gulf Coast, leaving behind a toxic stew of human sewage, dead cattle, leaking chemical plants, spilled gasoline storage tanks and abandoned pickup trucks. The cleanup will take patience, billions of dollars and fleets of heavy gear to clear acres of muck and enough debris to fill hundreds of football stadiums in effort overseen by federal and state authorities.

"Pops" at flooded Arkema plant in Crosby

By Keri Blakinger, Lindsay Ellis, and Matt Dempsey |

September 1, 2017 | Updated: September 1, 2017 12:08pm

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Photo: Godofredo A. Vasquez, Houston Chronicle

IMAGE 1 OF 2

The Arkema chemical plant is flooded from Tropical Storm Harvey Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2017, in Crosby, Texas. Floodwaters from Harvey have knocked out power and generators that keep volatile organic peroxides

[... more](#)

Pressure valves on one or more containers of volatile organic peroxides "popped" late Thursday at the flooded Arkema plant in Crosby, according to the company.

Leaders are on high alert for explosions like the ones that shot plumes of smoke into the air and caused an hours-long fire at the chemical plant early Thursday.

"You could call this a warning sign that more explosions or fires could be coming soon," said Jeff Carr, Arkema spokesperson.

Darryl Roberts, a safety official with the company, said the company expected additional fires to take place in a matter of days.

HIDDEN DANGER: Chemical facilities face danger during Harvey shutdowns

One local resident reported hearing the popping sounds overnight, and officials confirmed the noise came from the 18000 Crosby Eastgate plant swamped earlier this week by a murky deluge that cut off power.

Previously, the county said the popping sound indicated more organic peroxide exploding. Carr disagreed, blaming the pressure valves releasing instead.

The company said temperatures are slowly rising in the six containers it can track. There are no temperature gauges in the remaining two containers.

Company officials have said they expected the refrigeration to fail in all the trailers and that additional explosions are inevitable.

Harvey aftermath: Chemical plants imperiled

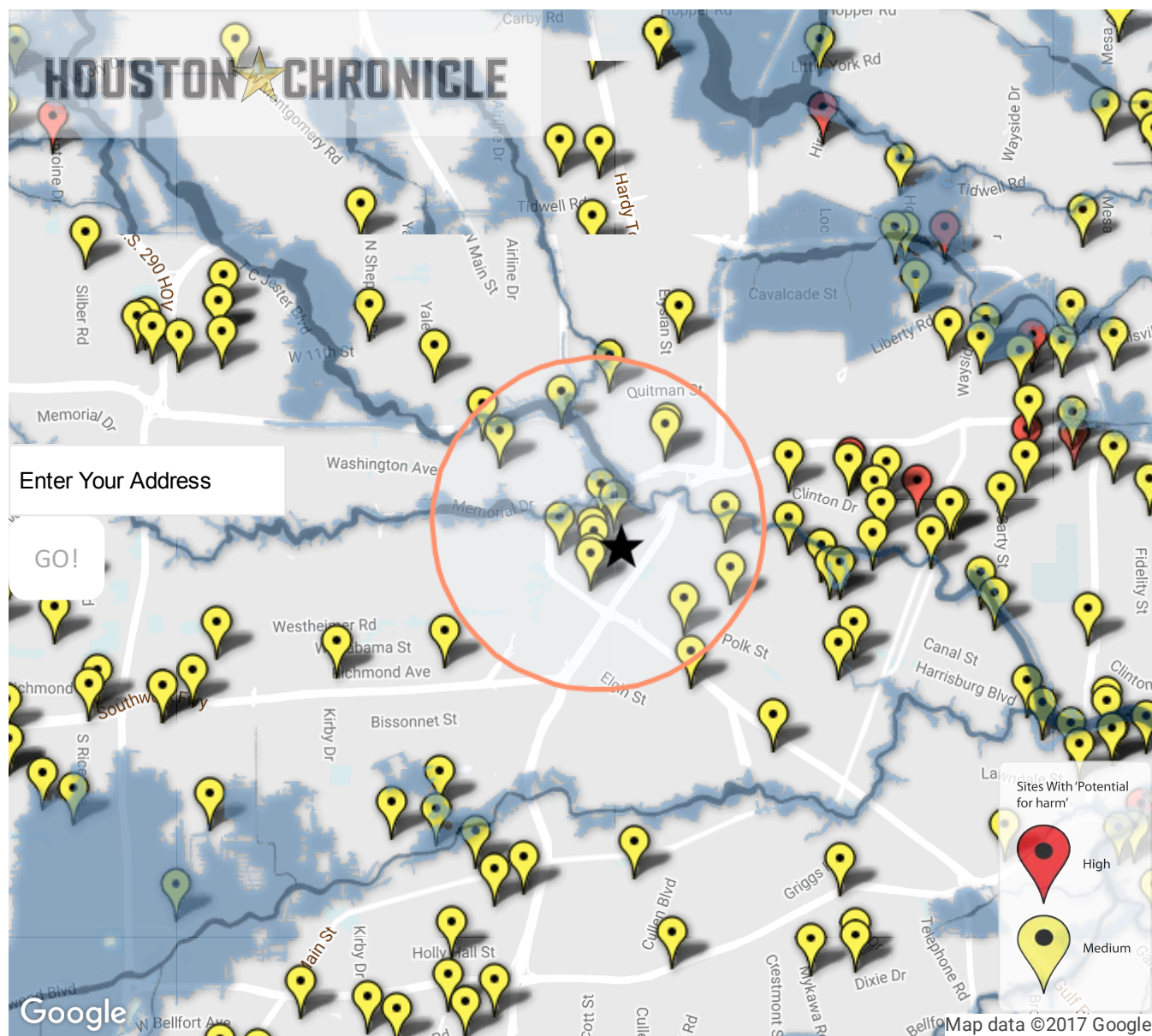
Hurricane Harvey's winds and floodwaters have created emergencies at chemical facilities across the Houston area, from an Exxon Mobil roof collapse at its massive Baytown complex to the risk of an explosion at a chemical plant northeast of Houston. We combined our [Chemical Breakdown](#) risk map,

TRANSLATOR

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based on a facility's potential for harm, with the region's 100-year floodplains. Type in a Harris County address in the search bar above to view which sites with "potential for harm" fall within a two-mile radius of that address.



Map written and coded by John D. Harden, with Harvey-related map updates by Rachael Gleason | Source: Mary Kay O'Connor Process Safety Center at Texas A&M and Houston Chronicle

The Arkema plant lost power earlier this week, knocking out the primary supply and back-up generators and forcing employees to move the organic peroxides into 18-wheeler box vans with cooling systems.

One employee was evacuated Monday night. Eleven other employees were evacuated Tuesday when the nitrogen refrigeration in the back-up containers also began to fail.

Company leaders on Thursday morning said they had initially considered relocating the chemicals but deemed that process too risky.



"For us to be in a position where we were going to put that material into trailers and try to move it, it runs the risk of not being able to get it out of the area or getting it stuck in traffic, or having a fire or an explosion at a highway or at a public area, versus in the rural area where this site is," Roberts said.

The company instead decided to leave the material on site with backup generators and a cooling system. The company could not say how elevated these generators were.

Arkema said neutralizing the material was not practical and that "at no point" did they intend to destroy it.

"Those were our levels of contingency," Roberts said. "Clearly that wasn't enough."

Local officials ordered the evacuation of residents after seeing the chemical inventories for the facility, which the company has not publicly released.

PUBLIC ACCESS DENIED: Arkema backtracks on promise to provide chemical inventory

The Crosby site has a history of regulatory problems.

In 2006, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality cited Arkema for a fire caused by improperly stored organic peroxides. In 2011, the same plant was cited for failing to maintain proper temperatures of its thermal oxidizer.

In 2016, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration fined Arkema \$91,724 after finding 10 violations at the Crosby site, many involving the mishandling of hazardous materials.

Arkema's CEO Richard Rowe said earlier this week that the company spent millions of dollars on upgrades after the fines and believed all issues cited in the inspections had been addressed.

CHEMICAL BREAKDOWN: In November 2014, four workers died at a DuPont plant in La Porte after being exposed to a toxic gas. Responding emergency workers weren't sure what was in the air. The surrounding community wasn't, either. A [Houston Chronicle investigation](#) dives deep into Houston's hidden world of explosions and toxic releases and probes the regulatory failures that put us in jeopardy. [Click here to read our series.](#)



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NEW ORLEANS BUSINESS NEWS

Harvey recovery: Can Louisiana contractors work in Texas?

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Floodwaters fill the road running through Houston's Lakes On Eldridge North subdivision in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Harvey on Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2017. (Brett Coomer/Houston Chronicle)

By Greg LaRose, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

It took years for the New Orleans region to rebound from [Hurricane Katrina](#), even with a surge of contractors to assist with demolition and rebuilding. Now as the damage toll continues to mount in Texas from [Tropical Storm Harvey](#), the need is expected to be just as acute once homeowners are able to return to their flooded properties.

The scale of damage in Texas could well exceed the capacity of local professionals, meaning there will be ample need and opportunity for out-of-state contractors to work in the recovery. But to protect property owners, there are state licensing requirements and regulations in place for visiting workers.

Will Louisiana contractors be able to cross the border and work right away? That depends on their specialty.



A tow truck driver hauls a car out of flood waters as motorists navigate a swollen Clear Creek in Friendswood, Texas, on Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2017. The area was inundated by waters from Tropical Storm Harvey. (Stuart Villanueva/The Galveston County Daily News)

Tow trucks

The most immediate need in flooded areas of Texas is for tow trucks, said Susan Stanford with the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation. Starting last Friday (Aug. 25), licensed out-of-state tow companies and operators were allowed go onto the TDLR website and fill out an **emergency application for licensure**. Tow truck operators can print out their license immediately if they do not have a criminal history; tow company licenses take approximately 24 to 48 hours.

If a tow truck operator doesn't not hold a tow company license, he or she can either be added to a Texas tow company's certificate or apply for a Texas tow company license. These emergency licenses will expire 90 days after being issued.



Felix Tijerina works on Tuesday, Aug. 29, 2017, to salvage items from his family's home in Rockport, Texas, that was destroyed in Hurricane Harvey. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)

Electricians

Louisiana and Texas have a reciprocity agreement that allows master electricians from one state to work in the other.

To work in Texas, a Louisiana electrician has to complete a [reciprocity form](#) and pay a \$45 license fee. A copy of a Louisiana license and a letter of good standing are also required as part of the process.



Michael and Laura Gill dispose of soaked carpet Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2017, after their home in Baytown, Texas, flooded during Tropical Storm Harvey. (Godofredo A. Vasquez/Houston Chronicle via AP)

Homebuilders, home improvement

Texas has no state regulation for homebuilders, unlike Louisiana where a residential builder's license is required for new construction or any home improvement job exceeding \$75,000.

Contractors should check with local government in Texas to determine whether any building permits are required, or if any emergency waivers are in place.



In this Monday, Aug. 28, 2017, photo, Shawn Hagdorn helps to cover the roof of his father's home in Rockport, Texas, that was damaged in the wake of Hurricane Harvey. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)

Roofers

Texas does not regulate roofers, but local permitting may be required. Contractors are urged to check with city or county government.



Mike Stamps stands in his flooded home in Kingwood, Texas, on Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2017. He was there to retrieve his two cats, which had to be left behind, after he was rescued by a jet ski Tuesday. (Karen Warren/Houston Chronicle)

Plumbers

The Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners was in the process of creating a provision status that would apply to licensed master plumbers from Louisiana, said Steve Davis, who heads enforcement for the agency. A similar process was in place for Hurricane Ike in 2008, when out-of-state professionals took part in the recovery, he said.

"We want to do everything we can to help those plumbers who are properly licensed -- and to help homeowners as quickly as possible," Davis said.

The board expects to unveil its new **website** after the Labor Day weekend, Davis said. At that time, it should have details on the provisional license process. This story will also be updated once more information becomes available.



Michael Saghian walks across the living room of his Houston home Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2017. It was damaged by floodwaters from Tropical Storm Harvey. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip)

David J. Phillip

Air conditioning, refrigeration

According to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, the fastest way for an out-of-state contractor to get licensed is to **register as an air conditioning and refrigeration technician online**. Applicants must be at least 18 years of age, and there is no exam required. The fee is \$20 and includes a background check.

Administrative rules allow a licensed, insured out-of-state contractor to sub-contract with a Texas licensed contractor, but that professional still may have to register in Texas as a technician.



Jose Martinez works Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2017, to remove drywall from a Houston home damaged by floodwaters from Tropical Storm Harvey. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip)

Mold remediation

Rules allow Texas-licensed mold remediation companies to hire non-registered workers from other states if the Texas-licensed company provides the worker with required training. The company is also responsible for making sure the worker's application for registration is submitted to the state before allowing the worker to perform mold remediation work.

Texas law allows a licensed mold remediation company to hire employees and then supervise the work performed by those employees. However, an employee and a contracted party are not the same. An unlicensed contractor or company does not fall within the licensing exception.

The Texas Department of Health and Human Services oversees mold remediation. That will change Nov. 1, when oversight moves to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation.



Alejandro Castillo takes a break from carrying water-soaked items out of her family's home after flood waters from Tropical Storm Harvey receded Thursday, Aug. 31, 2017, in Houston. (AP Photo/Charlie Riedel)

Manufactured housing

Anyone who wants to become licensed to sell or install manufactured housing in Texas must first take an eight-hour course that covers state law and consumer protection regulations. An additional four-hour course is required for retailers, and there is another four-hour course for installers.

Joe Garcia, executive director the **Manufactured Housing Division** of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, said licensing exams can be administered with minimal notice, and personalized education is available to help those who want to take part in disaster-related initiatives.

Licenses are good for two years, and annual fees range from \$200 (sales) to \$550 (retailer). Installers must carry \$25,000 in surety bond coverage; brokers and retailers need \$50,000.

Transporting manufactured housing is regulated by the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles. Gov. Greg Abbott has waived moving permit requirements for any disaster-related loads, Garcia said.



Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Brock Long speaks during a news conference in Washington, Thursday, Aug. 31, 2017, about Harvey's devastating flooding. (AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

FEMA jobs

FEMA is seeking applications for customer representatives in Texas, Virginia, Maryland, California and Puerto Rico. These employees are the primary points of contact for people seeking disaster assistance. The jobs involve processing claim requests for disaster assistance, and providing information on disaster assistance programs. Applications are being taken [online](#).


FEMA is also hiring what it calls reservists. These are on-call, temporary hires in areas such as financial management, hazard mitigation, historic preservation, disability integration and external affairs. The agency attempts to align interested professionals with jobs that suit their expertise. For more information, click [here](#).

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 **Ad Choices**

Harvey's Cleanup List: Toxic Plumes, Dead Animals, Moldy Debris

By **Todd Shields** and **Jennifer A Dlouhy**

September 1, 2017, 11:51 AM CDT

- Refuse from storm could fill hundreds of football stadiums
- Crews face heightened threat from polluted Superfund sites

Harvey has moved on from the U.S. Gulf Coast, leaving behind a toxic stew of human sewage, dead cattle, leaking chemical plants, [spilled](https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/2017/08/28/233577/texas-regulators-report-gas-spill-due-to-harvey/) [<https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/2017/08/28/233577/texas-regulators-report-gas-spill-due-to-harvey/>](https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/2017/08/28/233577/texas-regulators-report-gas-spill-due-to-harvey/) gasoline storage tanks and abandoned pickup trucks.

The cleanup will take patience, billions of dollars and fleets of heavy gear to clear acres of muck and enough debris to fill [hundreds of football stadiums](https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2006/05/03/debris-removal-surpasses-40-million-cubic-yards) [<https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2006/05/03/debris-removal-surpasses-40-million-cubic-yards>](https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2006/05/03/debris-removal-surpasses-40-million-cubic-yards) in effort overseen by federal and state authorities.

"When the flood waters recede is when you really have to look at the damage," Gina McCarthy, former administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, said in an interview. "It's going to take considerable time."

Refineries are spewing pollutants as they restart. Homeowners risk dangerous mold and contamination from household chemicals. And there's a heightened threat from a dozen or more polluted Superfund locations around Houston that may have been under Harvey's water.

Scores of people have been confirmed dead in one of the costliest natural disasters in the country's history. On Friday, many areas in Texas and Louisiana remained inaccessible and rescues continued as more than 21,000 federal staff worked on relief efforts, [according to](#) the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The American Red Cross had more than 2,000 disaster workers on the ground, and more than 38,000 people sought refuge in shelters.

The parts of Texas slammed by Hurricane Harvey are host to more than [400](http://www.sierraclub.org/compass/2017/08/what-happens-more-400-toxic-sites-hurricane) [<http://www.sierraclub.org/compass/2017/08/what-happens-more-400-toxic-sites-hurricane>](http://www.sierraclub.org/compass/2017/08/what-happens-more-400-toxic-sites-hurricane) chemical and plastics plants and oil and gas refineries. In Crosby, a chemical plant owned by [Arkema SA](#) [<https://www.bloomberg.com/quote/AKE:FP>](https://www.bloomberg.com/quote/AKE:FP) was hit by explosions after floods knocked out power supplies needed to refrigerate volatile chemicals. The EPA flew a chemical-sniffing plane in the area and said it didn't find toxic concentrations away from the facility.

[More: Trump Is Said to Weigh Tying Harvey Aid to Debt-Limit Increase <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-08-31/trump-is-said-to-weigh-tying-debt-limit-increase-to-harvey-aid>](https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-08-31/trump-is-said-to-weigh-tying-debt-limit-increase-to-harvey-aid)

"We will consider using any authority we have to further address the situation to protect human health and the environment," EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said in an emailed statement.

The White House is considering an initial \$5.95 billion disaster aid funding request to Congress, with \$5.5 billion to the U.S. emergency management agency and the remainder to the [Small Business Administration <https://www.bloomberg.com/quote/8888Z:US>](https://www.bloomberg.com/quote/8888Z:US), according to two administration officials.

Residential flood insurance losses from Hurricane Harvey are estimated to reach between \$6.5 billion and \$9.5 billion, with most of that drawn from the government-backed National Flood Insurance Program, [according to](#) the property data and analytics firm CoreLogic Inc./United States.

More than 311,000 Texans had already applied for federal disaster relief funds as of Thursday and more than \$530 million already had been granted, Vice President Mike Pence said. About 100,000 homes were damaged by the storm, White House Homeland Security Adviser Tom Bossert [said in a briefing <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-08-31/trump-is-said-to-weigh-tying-debt-limit-increase-to-harvey-aid>](https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-08-31/trump-is-said-to-weigh-tying-debt-limit-increase-to-harvey-aid).

[More: World's Most Crucial Chemical Suddenly in Short Supply on Harvey <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-09-01/world-s-most-important-chemical-made-rare-commodity-by-harvey>](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-09-01/world-s-most-important-chemical-made-rare-commodity-by-harvey)

Texas and U.S. officials [have warned <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/news/releases/joint-epa-tceqstatementarkema083117>](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/news/releases/joint-epa-tceqstatementarkema083117) residents to stay away from smoke plumes and flood water. Leslie Fields, director of environmental justice with the [Sierra Club <https://www.bloomberg.com/quote/0592216D:US>](https://www.bloomberg.com/quote/0592216D:US), ticked off a list of hazards, including dead animals in flood water, gasoline from sunken cars, and potentially leaks from a former paper plant that contains cancer-causing dioxin.

"It's a bad situation," said Fields. "This water is some of the worst ever."

Refineries generate extra pollution as they shut down and then turn back on, much as a cold automobile can spew clouds if it's started after sitting idle for a time, according to Elena Craft, a senior health scientist with the Environmental Defense Fund. That's led to 2 million pounds of emissions in Texas since Aug. 23, the equivalent of 40 percent of last year's total, according to state records, Craft said.

"We don't really know what communities might have been exposed to," Craft said. "Their risk is, overall, increased."

Pollution already lying in and under the ground in Superfund sites -- heavily contaminated places tagged by the EPA for cleanup -- can be spread by floodwaters, said McCarthy, the agency's former administrator.

[Why We Expect More Havoc From Hurricanes Like Harvey: QuickTake <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/quicktake/hurricanes-and-typhoons>](https://www.bloomberg.com/view/quicktake/hurricanes-and-typhoons)

"You can't contain contaminants in a flooded area," McCarthy said. "EPA's going to have to go back and look at those areas to see what's happened with existing contamination, as well as look at whatever new Superfund sites are being created now."

The top task is to restore water treatment facilities, said the Environmental Defense Fund's Craft.

Flooding swamped municipal water pumps in Beaumont, Texas, leaving the city of more than 100,000 people without access to drinking water. Across the stricken area, 22 wastewater treatment plants were inoperable due to flooding and power outages, according to [a list maintained by <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/response/hurricanes>](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/response/hurricanes) maintained by [the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, a state regulator. It listed 53 inoperable public drinking water systems.](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/response/hurricanes)

Crews will flock to the Gulf Coast to help with the cleanup, and companies will need to establish camps with trailers, generators and showers to accommodate them, said Jody Cordaro, chief executive officer of SCE Environmental Group Inc., a Lake Ariel, Pennsylvania-based contractor that cleans up after environmental disasters.

[Read more: Harvey Could Reshape How and Where Americans Build Homes](#)

Workers will use an armada of gear including small loaders to clean streets, trucks with grappling hooks to lift debris from curbside, and giant grinders to chew through muck that can contain trees and housing remnants. "I would venture to say that every piece of heavy equipment in Texas is already accounted for and rented," Cordaro said.

Some of the waste will be riddled with fuel and other contaminants, and will need to be trucked to landfills that could be several states away, Cordaro said.

Cordaro's company sent 200 workers to help clean up after Hurricane Sandy struck New Jersey and New York in 2012.

They stayed on the job for more than seven months.

"I think this cleanup is going to be significantly longer," he said.

Chemical spills and runoff unleashed by Harvey could disproportionately affect people of color and the poor, including residents living in the shadow of southeast Texas refineries.

"Refineries and petrochemical operations in Houston, almost too numerous to count, have been venting a toxic mix of hazardous air pollutants those trapped by rising floodwaters are forced to breath," Michele Roberts, co-coordinator of the Environmental Justice Health Alliance, a policy group, said in an email. "The long-term health consequences of this toxic air pollution are unknown."

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